

Subpart B – Procedures

Process for Completing Rapid Watershed Assessments

Development of Rapid Watershed Assessments

The first step is development of a resource profile compiling the best readily-available data which provide a physical, biological, and sociological characterization of watershed resources; known resource concerns; social capital and rates of participation in conservation; and the status and progress of resource conservation in the watershed. The profile should be a brief document composed of maps, tables, and brief narratives describing the information suggested above. The information should be generated through the use of GIS and brief interviews with local resource conservationists and other knowledgeable resource professionals. This information should prove to be a solid foundation for the assessment phase. The profile should be used as a mechanism to generate discussion among the various stakeholders in the watershed, providing an opportunity for local input on the resource conditions and concerns in the watershed.

(1) **Format**

- (i) Introduction – This provides a general description of the location, size, and political units associated with the watershed.
- (ii) Physical Description – This section should be derived from relevant GIS data that provides a physical description of the watershed. Data should include land use/land cover, precipitation/climate, Common Resource Areas, stream flow data, and land capability class. Other data, such as confined animal feeding operations, water rights, etc., should be included as appropriate.
- (iii) Resource Concerns – This would include a listing of sole source aquifers, 303(d) listed water bodies, threatened and endangered species, and other resource concerns for the watershed.
- (iv) Census and Social Data – This section of the profile should include census data and agricultural census data relevant to dominance of agriculture; number of farms and producers; population demographics, distribution, and growth, etc.
- (v) Status of Resources – This section should be used to describe the status and history of resource conservation in the watershed.
- (vi) References – This should be a listing of the sources of information and data used to develop the profile.
- (vii) Data sources used should be consistent and comparable for a predetermined geographic region.

Much of this data can be presented in either graphical or tabular form. The associated narratives should be general and brief. Again, this document is intended to be a focal point for discussion with local stakeholders and should be developed using information which is generally accessible and able to provide a general picture of resource conditions and concerns for a watershed. The profile will be further expanded upon during the assessment phase of the RWA to provide additional supporting data.

The second phase of the process is the development of the assessment matrix. It summarizes, in tabular form, current resource conditions and related maintenance costs are identified. It should also summarize desired resource conditions, conservation opportunities and related installation and maintenance costs, qualitative effects on primary resource concerns and potential funding sources for conservation implementation.

(2) **Format**

- (i) Current Conditions Tables – These would be tables or Excel spreadsheets (recommended) detailing the current level of conservation in the watershed. Separate tables would be developed for each of the major land uses and would include the practices installed to date, the annual costs of maintaining the current level of conservation, and an effects matrix for the current level of conservation participation.
- (ii) Future Conditions Tables – These would include tables or Excel spreadsheets (recommended) which identify appropriate suites of conservation practices needed to deal with the primary resource concerns for each of the major land uses to be addressed. This section should identify the quantities and costs of the necessary practices. In addition, it should again identify the cost of installing and maintaining the practices and develop an effects matrix for the developed Resource Management Systems. The anticipated participation rate should also be identified in this section. (Again, it should be noted that this level of assessment only itemizes costs for on-farm conservation and not for accompanying infrastructure changes that may also be needed, such as new irrigation delivery systems, flood protection, extensive structural stream restoration, etc. Infrastructure changes usually require a more in-depth analysis than permitted in RWA. Acknowledgement of the need for infrastructure changes should be made if identified during the assessment process.)
- (iii) Summary Table – This section should summarize the various costs associated with the Resource Management Systems developed in the previous step. In addition, it should identify the estimated participation rates, and a set of potential funding sources which would be able to implement the identified conservation practices. This table should have: an approximate dollar figure for what it would take to treat the primary watershed resource concerns that exist today, an anticipated rate of participation, and a list of potential funding tools.